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NATIONALISM.

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IN the October number of the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* is a paper by N. P. Gilman, well known through his work on "Profit-sharing," which is entirely devoted to a criticism of Edward Bellamy's novel, *Looking Backward*, and which precisely for that reason admirably shows us what Nationalism is not. Yet there is in the article a sentence which, carried out to its logical conclusion, will lead us to the right path, viz. this: "The wide circulation (of the novel) is due to the fact that the earnest feeling with which it is written coincides with a very deep and wide-spread discontent with existing social conditions; it signifies an inclination to question the prevailing social order in a large class not ranked as workingmen." This is, indeed, the milk in the cocoanut; but Mr. Gilman as a candid man must admit that this statement is somewhat defective, that is to say, not merely discontent, but as a matter of fact, sympathy with a social reconstruction on socialist lines is thereby revealed. Thus amplified, the admission is of capital importance. It is known, that some time ago 200,000 copies of the novel had been sold; counting five readers to each copy we thus have a million Americans of the educated classes—mark that point—who are so dissatisfied with the established order that they hail a socialist *regime* with ardor, and who are in spiritual communion round a book. It is this tremendous, novel fact that really constitutes the movement which has come to be known as "Nationalism," and it is this fact that ought to be emphasized, explained, and to have its future importance outlined, a task that will be the object of this paper.

For it should now be evident that to prove the scheme of *Looking Backward* worthless, is not to the point at all. That novel has already done its work. First it was, and is, itself, a symptom of the state of mind of our intellectual classes;

but it was something else, also. But what? It is highly superficial to say that it has been the cause of Nationalism, i. e., that it has produced this discontent and this sympathy. But it has done something, only second in importance. It has served as a mirror to this one million Americans, in which they saw their own ideas objectively reflected, and thus they became for the first time conscious of them; moreover, they became thereby for the first time aware of the great number of people of their own class who shared their notions — and, as Novalis says: “Nothing so much strengthens my conviction as to know that another soul thinks the same thought” — finally, outsiders thereby learned that their own countrymen had to a great extent become infected with what had been hitherto supposed to be un-American ideas. This great work cannot be undone. To prove this particular scheme impracticable will simply have the effect of making somebody else propose a more realizable plan on the same lines.

We called this discontent and this sympathy on the part of a million Americans who are not wage-workers a tremendous and novel fact, and this certainly it is; it has its counterpart in no other country, that is to say, not at all in continental Europe, and but in a small measure is it found in Great Britain. That this will prove a great blessing to the future development of our country, we shall try to show further on. But how shall we explain its presence here and now?

First let us note, that while this sympathy with socialism is a novel phenomenon in our well-off classes, the discontent is by no means so, but dates at least from 1840. It was about that year, that an American, Brisbane, a disciple of Fourier, was allotted a column, weekly, in Horace Greeley's *Tribune*, which he proceeded to fill with glowing descriptions of Fourierism; these very soon commenced to fire the American heart, and like a mighty wave they passed over the whole settled part of the United States from East to West, and indeed, their dying embers did not expire till fifteen years after. These “Associationists” as they called themselves were necessarily from the classes in easy circumstances, for their principal object was to build large, costly buildings, called “Phalansteries,” where hundreds of families could live together, and carry on industries and agricul-

ture in common. They dotted the United States over with such Phalansteries, the most celebrated of which was Brook Farm, near Boston. Most of them broke down after a couple of years though the last survived till 1855. But the memory of this mighty movement still survives, and many Nationalists undoubtedly are the sons of old Associationists.

The war of the Rebellion naturally absorbed into the ranks of the Abolitionists all those, discontented with social abuses; but after its close there arose another movement among a class, generally considered in easy circumstances, the farmers in the west. It was the Granger movement, which had two objects: to curb the great railroad companies and do away with the middlemen in towns and cities. The first object was completely attained by electing legislatures and governors to do their will; these grangers for the first time bridled "Private Enterprise" by scaling down by law fares and freight, but though they had established a great many co-operative stores, they voluntarily gave up their fight against the town merchants, by being reminded of the principle, "Live and let live." But immediately the discontent spread to Americans of the same class in the cities: that was the Greenback movement. That this was a struggle on the part of small business men against the great capitalists is evident from the fact that the principal plank of their platforms always was a demand that the government should issue legal tenders and lend them to citizens with no interest, but on good security; the labor planks, occasionally inserted to capture workingmen's votes, were, of course, an afterthought. The main thing is, that it was small business men who wanted money at little or no interest, and they were the only ones who had property to give as security.

Hitherto, the working-classes, as such, were not affected by these movements; these were confined to persons above them in the social scale. But with the so-called labor riots of 1877 the social discontent will be found to have filtered down to them. These events, as if with one stroke, opened their eyes to what an immense power they are, when they are united, when they have leaders and when they know what they want. It is from that date that the Knights of Labor emerged from their secrecy and became a power; with that date our workingmen became Socialists. The German agitators have simply been to them what Bellamy's book

was to the intellectual classes, — a mirror in which they saw their own ideas reflected. The common experience of these agitators has been, that after a lecture members of the audience came up to them and said: "If what you have told us is Socialism then we are already Socialists." That is further shown by that plank in the constitution in the Knights of Labor which demands the abolition of the wage-system and the institution of a system of national co-operation; by the fact that the leaders of the even larger Federation of Labor are avowed Socialists and by the further fact that the George movement was formidable just as long as it was supposed to be socialistic and no longer.

We should then explain Nationalism among America's cultured classes by the fact, that long ago the well-to-do classes felt a discontent with social conditions — conclusively proving, if proof were needed after our two great wars, both waged for a principle, that the ideal of thoughtful Americans is by no means the "Almighty Dollar" — that this discontent at length filtered down to the working classes, and that now (according to the law that progress moves in the form of a spiral) it has returned to the well-off portion of our people, but raised to a higher plane. Now it is discontent *plus* a definite social ideal. The present writer years ago was confident that an underground movement was going on, and that Socialism was fermenting in the brains of the whole American people, and has ever since been watching for the sprouts that he was sure would sometime and somewhere appear, and at last he was rewarded by the appearance of the two movements simultaneously: Nationalism and Christian Socialism. This, by the way, is another proof that Bellamy's book was not a cause, for Christian Socialism was by no means an effect of the book but a parallel phenomenon.

Nationalism, we said, is a higher plane than the Socialism that has appeared among the working-classes. It should constantly be borne in mind that there are two sorts of Socialism: a good sort and a bad sort. There is a Socialism of hatred and spoliation and another of good-will and mutual helpfulness. Now please observe, I do not by any means say, that the Socialism of the working-classes belongs to the former kind, for it does not, as I positively know; but nevertheless there is a decided difference between the Socialism advocated by Nationalists and that generally preached to our working-

classes. To this distinction it is worth paying some attention.

German Socialists lay undue stress on Socialism being a class-movement, which indeed they make the decisive test for fellowship; and then they interpret that term in such a way as to place themselves in a radically wrong position from an American standpoint. They draw a horizontal line through society, with manual workers below the line and all others above it, and then they virtually preach a class-war between the two divisions. No wonder that in Germany they are charged with preaching hatred and contempt against the upper classes, for that, to be frank, is what they are doing. This, of course, is philosophically and morally wrong, but it must in fairness be admitted, that all over Continental Europe there is a profound historical excuse for such a position. Take France for example. Ever since the memorable massacre of peaceable workingmen by Lafayette and Bailly on the *Champ de Mars*, July 17, 1791, there has been a profound and undying hatred between the workers and the bourgeoisie, a hatred started by the latter, and exhibited by them on every occasion they have had of cooling it in the blood of the former — the last of which was the fall of the Commune. No wonder the French working-classes have replied to it with a corresponding animosity, which has been fed by the shameless manner in which the bourgeoisie has enriched itself at the public expense. The same feeling exists to a greater or less extent all over Europe — a sad omen for coming events!

But when the foreign agitators came to this country and preached this spirit, they committed a fearful blunder, and created the greatest stumbling-block in the way of their success. The writer knows that just when the deplorable bomb burst, a society of Americans was just about to be formed in Chicago for the purpose of spreading the same socialistic ideas that Bellamy's novel contains, but of course, it then had to disband for a time. The fact is, as we all know, that this class-hatred has never obtained among Anglo-Saxons, and that particularly in our country there have always been found noble hearts both among the rich and the comfortable classes who have had a true sympathy with the toilers and some even who were willing to sacrifice all to right their wrongs. The wave of Fourierism, already spoken

of, was one sign of it. Nationalism and Christian-Socialism are another most cheering sign. These movements then rectify the blunder; they make the dividing line between the two contending forces vertical instead of horizontal, thereby dividing all classes, so that we have still on one side the poor, the suffering, but also the noble, the progressive and patriotic, opposed to the ignorant and the selfish who find their advantage in the present social anarchy.

This is another vital distinction, that Nationalism stands for patriotism, while European Socialism considers that sentiment a vice rather than a virtue. For this there is also ample excuse to be found, in the geographical position of Europe. It is impossible to realize Socialism in one country, say Germany, as long as Russia and France stand in a threatening attitude on its borders. No wonder then that Karl Marx closed every exhortation to his disciples with the words: "Working-men of all countries unite!" No wonder that the wage-workers have followed the injunction, and, shaking hands across the borders, ignore all merely national interests, and denounce patriotism as selfishness. All this loses considerable force when we pass to Great Britain; but here in the United States it is not applicable at all. Nationalism emphasizes the very contrary. It stamps patriotism as an ethical sentiment which in truth it is, because nations are the necessary intermediary steps in the evolution of humanity. Since love of mankind is still too weak a sentiment to move any but the choicest spirits, it behooves us wherever possible to foster patriotism, the more so as no people on earth is yet truly a "nation." And that is precisely possible and practicable in these United States. We are a self-contained nation, which is just where we have a great advantage over Great Britain. We can here realize Socialism without asking leave of others, and therefore ought to go to work and do it, without considering others, assured as we can be that we shall in the end prove ourselves the best servants of humanity. Nationalism therefore justifies its name, and might indeed with propriety call itself the American Party. We are proud of Uncle Sam, and what we intend to do is, to enable him to grow on the very lines that were laid down by the Pilgrims when they landed on Plymouth Rock.

What does this prophesy for the future? Some, perhaps,

will say that Nationalism will end as the previous movements of discontent have ended. We think the contrary solution is far more justifiable. Just this persistency augurs well for it, especially when we remember that the movement is now no mere vague sentiment, but has a definite purpose and plan, that the muscle and the conscience of the country have now for the first time joined hands. Consider for a moment that the year 2000, the year in which the scene of "Looking Backward" is laid, is not so very far ahead of us; in fact, it is precisely as far ahead of us as the American Revolution is behind us. We stand in the midst of the two periods, so that working for that future is working for our grandchildren. But consider, further, how immense our growth will be in all respects by that time. Consider our growth in population: we shall probably be two hundred millions by that time. Consider our growth in wealth, but also our growth in misery and discontent—if things go on as now. Consider how trusts and monopolies will have grown by that time, but also the organizations of the wage-workers and the disinherited—if individualism shall continue to rule. Does any sane man suppose that our people then will tamely submit to such industrial slavery? Aye, is it not as sure as anything can be, that long, long before that year comes round, our politically free, spirited, intelligent people will demand a radical transformation? Think simply of that last, final strike which is bound to come by the united organized workers against the united Trusts of the country, and which the workers necessarily must lose; will not by that time, at all events, the eyes of the people be opened to the fact, that private ownership of the means of labor is henceforth incompatible with industrial development?

This brings us to the contents, the objects of Nationalism, its negative and positive claims. The former are two: that the wage-system is now an immoral relation, and must be superseded by a more equitable system, and next, that the present capitalist, competitive system must soon fall to pieces by its own weight.

When a system is seen by good men of all classes in a democracy to be unjust and inequitable, nothing can save it. It is now plain, that the wage-system makes a commodity of the bodies and souls of the workers, that it makes them shamefully dependent on the will and whim of an individual

employer, in no way better than themselves, for the mere privilege of working for a living, and that it leaves them in horrible insecurity. This view is one of the fruits of Evolution, for a short time ago the working-classes themselves were not aware of any injustice in the system. The trades-unions of England have been engaged in a sufficient number of strikes, but all that they contended for was a better situation under the system of wages. Now they have become self-conscious, conscious of their dignity as human beings, and therefore all their organizations denounce, and are standing protests against, that system.

And they have allies everywhere. Read the pastoral of the bishops of the Episcopal church, read at the close of their late convention: "It is a fallacy to look upon the labor of men, women, and children as a commercial commodity to be bought and sold as an inanimate and irresponsible thing. The heart and soul of a man cannot be bought or hired for money in any market, and to act as if they were not needed in the world's vast works is un-Christian and unwise." This is Nationalist doctrine.

What shall we say to the fact, that Wm. H. Mallock, the anti-socialist writer, is brought by logic over to our side? In a late paper of his, he says: "The loss of security is the real injury to the modern laborer. To be discharged means to be cut off from society, thrust out of all connection with civilization, and this makes want of employment a real torture to him." And then—oh, marvel!—he goes on to advocate that the workingmen shall be made into an "estate of the realm," that is to say, that trades-unions shall be legally incorporated, shall embrace all the workers in the trades and speak with authority for them, and distribute what work there is to be done among their members. This, he says, "is the only way to lift the masses into a recognized and permanent place in the solid structure of the commonwealth." No socialist could go any farther; such a plan would effectually do away with the "scab."

And Charles F. Adams, as President of the Union Pacific R. R. Co., has in a paper in *Scribner's Monthly* pronounced in favor of a scheme that goes far in the same direction. He wants to see all the employees of railroads organized, with power to elect a board that shall see to it that all employees are sure of their positions during good behavior and also sure

of due promotion, and shall settle all grievances. That means that in the future employers will not be permitted to carry on "their" business just to suit themselves, simply because it is not "their own" business exclusively: and that, again, means that the wage-system is tottering.

No mere ornament like "Profit-sharing" will save it, which is, by the express admission of Mr. Gilman, nothing but a scheme to get the workers to create an additional fund by their labor, out of which their shares are to come; the balance, of course, going into the pockets of the employers. A pure imposition, "with which," as he says, "Profit-sharing must stand or fall."

Nationalists next contend that the present competitive system cannot possibly last, and that "imperial events" prove this conclusively. The system has had everything in its favor, especially in the United States, but the planlessness which is inherent in it, is wrecking it. Division of labor is our great principle now. No one does the whole of anything, but hands his work over to a man of a complementary trade. The world's industry is carried on as a vast co-operation of labor; is an extremely complicated machine where each trade represents a wheel. Its proper working absolutely requires one mind to look after it, that all parts may be balanced and harmonious. But, as a matter of fact, the organization of industry is now kept going by the individual self-interest of many men, working without knowledge of each other, their doings, and intentions. Everyone is guessing and guessing, generally, pretty wildly. It is a wonder, not that there is periodical depression, but that the industrial machine works at all. But what an enormous amount of waste!

This, however, leads to another point of even greater importance, one that may be called startling when first we reflect on it. That our present system of individualism and private enterprise has immensely advanced civilization is freely admitted, and it has done this mainly by advancing production to formerly unknown limits. But the point is, that this has already sometime ago been radically changed. Now instead of advancing, the system actually chokes and limits production. The system, by being a profit-system, that is to say, by carrying production on solely for the sake of profit, confines production as in a ring of granite. Our capacity for

production is illimitable, but it is not allowed to be utilized by this profit-mongering system, which restrains consumption. It is true what Prof. Walker writes: "We need a new Adam Smith to write the Economics of Consumption, in which will be found the real dynamics of wealth," and it is a most lamentable fact that our industrial leaders, wholly intent on production, and as has been said, "anxious to produce with merely a stoker and an engineer," have in their blindness and selfishness, entirely overlooked the fact that they need consumers to buy their goods of them. Now Nationalists come and say: "Let society take charge and let her permit all her willing hands and brains to work, by furnishing them the necessary capital, and then we shall see a glorious harmony between production and distribution."

This brings us at last, to the positive scheme of Nationalism: that of nationalizing all the industries which has given the movement its name, and we shall see if it is so impracticable. But please observe, that we do not speak of Bellamy's plan in particular, but of the general socialistic principle, carried out in practice. It is of this that Mr. Gilman speaks, promising to prove "how contradictory it is to the actual development of modern industry so far and its probable evolution hereafter." When the writer read these words he hastily and expectantly turned the following pages to read the fulfilment of this startling promise, but not a word of proof did he find. It is, of course, easy enough to assert such a proposition, if one is of a sufficiently rash character, but we cannot see that this mere assertion can impose on any reader. Can anyone, not wholly blind, deny that the whole evolution of industrial affairs is tending in a socialistic direction? The public is, of course, unaware, that Socialists long ago prophesied that all business would eventually, and soonest in the United States, be concentrated into monopolies. It is, however, a fact. Now we have the "Trusts," we actually behold Trusts everywhere, and we confidently call attention to them as object lessons that no sensible man can disregard, however unwelcome they may appear; and there can be no doubt that they have opened the eyes of many a Nationalist.

We saw the instability, the planlessness of business, carried on under competition. The Trust is the complete abandonment of the principle by which industry hitherto has been

developed. The Trust is the shortest road to harmonious action of all and consequent stability; but it is at the same time a concession to Socialism and its working principle; more than that, it is a practical confession of the socialistic charges that competition causes great waste and that by concentration the cost of production can be materially lessened and the market controlled so that no goods need remain unsold. In other words the Trust utilizes Socialism for the benefit of the capitalists. But it does something more important.

We saw above, that planlessness was one of the evils of the present system; that is remedied by the Trust. But there was another, and a greater evil: the lessening of consumption; for that evil the Trust is no remedy at all. It does help to harmonize production and consumption, but it does it by regulating and decreasing production, while precisely what society needs is *more* production. Now the other great effort of the Trust is that it calls attention to the practicability of socialistic principles everywhere, and shows that in no country can these principles be so easily and quickly applied to business life as here. It brings the dilemma before the public mind: either organized capital, or organized government, for organized business action we must have.

The Trusts, in other words, prepare the public mind, as nothing else could, for Nationalism, and they prepare for its advent practically. There is not the least doubt in the world that by the commencement of the next century all social activities will be conducted by Trusts, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific. When that is accomplished, what can be more "practicable" than to cut the heads off these "Trusts"—figuratively; *i. e.*, we depose those useless members of them who do nothing but put profits into their pockets, and let the concerns run on as before, but now carried on for the benefit of the public and of their workers and managers, producing no longer for profit's sake, but to satisfy social wants. What a benefit the information which these Trusts now collect of all that relates to the various productive agencies will prove to the future Nationalist administration!

Here a word about the distinction that is often sought to be made between semi-public functions and ordinary business. Gilman makes it, thinking it proper that Nationalism should busy itself about public gasworks, but—by heavens!—not about public milk or ice stores, no; and a similar distinction

George has tried to introduce. But what distinction is there in principle? How could we know that the manufacture and sale of tobacco could be carried on by government, if France had not successfully tried the experiment? The fact is, that every business which an individual can engage in is a public function. A man carries on a drug store because society, or a section of it, needs him then and there, and if he is not needed he very soon gets notice to leave. Undoubtedly business men and most people have not yet come to see their true relation to society; they believe that their business is entirely a private affair—but that is a similar paradox as when under the Ptolemaic system folks believed themselves the centre of the solar system. Nationalism will reverse all this, will make the individual's views correspond to facts.

At length we come to the old objection, which undoubtedly will be made until the actual change is accomplished, when those who then should advocate a return to the system we now have, will be looked on as fools to be laughed at: the objection put by Gilman in these words: "It will utterly subvert individuality, public freedom, and the deepest founded American institutions—will completely annihilate the American state." This objection is nothing but a misapprehension.

Remember we do not need to accept the details of Bellamy's scheme. No doubt he himself will be the first to admit, that it would be foolish to foretell the details of the reconstructed social order, still more foolish to lay down laws or plans in advance which posterity must follow. It is very easy in imagination to depict an economic society in which the most perfect freedom and individuality should be guaranteed and fostered and where our "deepest founded institutions"—including our town-meetings,—would be preserved and even developed.

We supposed the Trusts deprived of their useless functionaries—their interests, however, compensated for to their actual value, and paid for in annuities, but without interest. That will leave the workers and managers to carry on the business just as they please in the future. They will form a trades-union of their own, and determine for themselves how many hours they will work; they will choose their own foremen, managers, and superintendents—which, however, by

no means carries with it a right to dismiss them after being elected—and they will determine in what ratios their rewards should be distributed among them. The only infringement of their liberty will be that exercised by the central superintendent who distributes among the different factories the amount of goods to be produced for the coming year, and sees to it that they are manufactured in a workman-like manner. Is that not far superior to the liberty and individuality that is enjoyed now even by fortunate individuals?

Nationalism, or American Socialism, is surely coming to stay. The whole tendency of events proves it. What a proud distinction for our American civilization, compared with Europe, if the change can be accomplished here under the leadership of our intellectual classes!